

Politics and the Sense of Place in Northern Ireland

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Media coverage of Northern Ireland or the North of Ireland tends to reach an American audience only when political violence erupts within the divided population of this officially British province. Since the late 1960s and the reemergence of civil unrest, nearly 4,000 people have lost their lives in what is known as the Troubles. Today as politicians negotiate, security forces and paramilitaries more or less uphold a ceasefire, and northerners enjoy a period of relative calm, longstanding division continues to be reflected in the names people use to refer to their home. For many Protestants, home is Northern Ireland or Ulster. For many Catholics, home is the North of Ireland or the Six Counties, terms that refuse to recognize British authority. For some the greatest concern is civil rights and the unequal distribution of power and privilege, for others it is national security and political birthright, for others it is self-determination and political destiny, and for yet others it is anxiety over the future of religious freedom. Always at stake in this largely segregated province is the issue of territory. There, one's sense of place is often linked with opposing sectarian identities and is of immediate relevance and potentially life and death consequence.

Rehearsing a few facts is necessary to set the stage for a consideration of the political and rhetorical uses of place in this troubled province. "Catholic" and "Protestant" serve as generally accepted, simplified labels for the two main groups in Counties Tyrone, Derry, Antrim, Down, Armagh, and Fermanagh. Although these labels seem at first to signify religious affiliations, the two groups to which they refer are also divided by ethnic identifications—Irish vs. British—and political affiliations—nationalist vs. unionist. Nationalists long to see Ireland united in one state, while unionists wish to preserve the

union of Northern Ireland and Britain. Furthermore, nationalists and unionists as political groupings encompass, respectively, the smaller groupings of republicans and loyalists. Republicanism can be understood as the militant subset of Irish nationalism. In other words, nationalists are those people—mostly Catholics—who are invested in a unified Ireland, and republicans are nationalists who have historically resorted to or supported the use of physical force to press for a united Ireland. In a similar dynamic, we can understand loyalism to be the militant subset of Ulster unionism. That is, unionists are those people—mostly Protestant—who are in favor of maintaining the union with Britain, and loyalists are unionists willing to resist a unified Ireland through physical force. This is a simplified summary of the contemporary political spectrum. Understanding how this situation came into being requires a brief description of the roots of conflict in a history of competition over land and resources.

In the seventeenth century, English and Scottish Protestant settlers were sent by successive British regimes to colonize the recently conquered north of Ireland in what became known as the Plantation of Ulster. Native Catholics were pushed westward into higher elevations and land less valuable in a largely agrarian economy. Over the centuries, Irish Catholic resistance to British hegemony in both the north and south waxed and waned. In the early twentieth century, Irish separatists—most but not all of them Catholics—fought for and gained independence for the majority of Ireland. However, in six northeastern counties, descendants of Protestant colonizers were in the majority and wished to remain British citizens. Eventually a compromise in 1922 partitioned Ireland between north and south, allowing the six northeastern counties to remain part of Britain. As the limits of territory between the newly established Irish Free State and the British province of Northern Ireland were debated and finalized, a new parliament for Northern Ireland got underway outside Belfast at Stormont. There in 1934 Northern Irish Prime Minister James Craig proclaimed, “We are a Protestant parliament and a Protestant state.”

Today there remain places perceived and experienced as essentially Protestant, places such as the north coast of Antrim, the Sandy Row of Belfast, and the center of what Protestants call the city of Londonderry.

Today there also remain places perceived and experienced as essentially Catholic, places such as South Armagh, the Falls Road in Belfast, and the Bogside of what Catholics call the city of Derry. Assertions of segregated territory are regularly maintained by the annual parades of the unionist Orange Order and nationalist Ancient Order of Hibernians. Through their parade routes, these organizations circumscribe space and symbolically claim territory as either Protestant or Catholic. Likewise, both the colors painted on curb stones and the murals painted on the gable-end walls of public housing in urban areas proclaim one neighborhood as loyalist and another as republican. Many political ballads, too, commemorate past victories and sacrifices by Catholics and Protestants at given sites on the landscape while affixing potentially sectarian identities to these sites.¹ These forms of marking territory are simultaneously forms of commemoration that serve opposing Catholic and Protestant collective identities through selective, partisan representations of the past. Continually reestablished, opposing Catholic and Protestant senses of place and history contribute to a general presupposition that division and conflict are natural, preordained, and perhaps sanctioned by the authority of tradition.

These assertions of separate Catholic and Protestant territory and of opposing versions of history exist, and it is not my intention to deny or depreciate them. However, there also exist alternative social constructions of place and history that drive at different persuasive ends and should not be overlooked. At stake in these alternative constructions of place and history are a challenge to sectarian division and an appeal to that which is local and shared.

In particular, I want to call attention to the grassroots efforts of a group of people sharing the mixed Catholic/Protestant Derg River Valley in West Tyrone, a place where I have conducted fieldwork over the last three years. At a time when many politicians, journalists, and commentators are convinced that reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants depends on willful acts of forgetting,² ordinary citizens in the Derg Valley are engaged in careful acts of remembering that encourage a pointedly nonsectarian sense of local history and identity. Crucial to their efforts is advocating a less contentious sense of the past in their bids to interpret space. Certain locations in the landscape

shared by Catholics and Protestants in the Derg Valley are useful for indexing and exemplifying alternative views of the past that provide critical perspective on the present and the potential future.

Before addressing these efforts in this place, I need to establish a more general understanding of the interrelationship between place and history. In Ireland, as elsewhere, to speak of land is to speak of memory. Central in Irish oral historical traditions is a genre of narrative known as *dinnseanchas*, or “place lore,” which comprises what most folklorists refer to as local historical legends. Through *dinnseanchas* the landscape is inscribed with meaning, and history in the mind becomes organized primarily in terms of place rather than chronology, “where” rather than “when.” Dates are secondary, for it is in location that the past inheres in the present and offers itself for contemplation. When I asked my neighbors in the Derg Valley about the past they did not offer narratives preoccupied with dates, beginning chronologically with the Neolithic and extending through the arrival of St. Patrick, the Reformation, the Plantation, Partition, and yesterday’s football results. Rather, one neighbor recalled and offered me directions to Carrickanaltar mass rock, where centuries ago her ancestors were forced to worship in secrecy. The mass rock reminded her of a story about a hunted priest to which we will return. Another walked with me over Mullanabreen Hill. There, he recalled, Catholics and Protestants found common ground and conspired as members of the United Irishmen to overthrow self-serving British rule in the wake of the American and French Revolutions. Also on this hill, nearly a century after the United Irishmen’s defeat, local farmers established a Land League Hall to press for agrarian reforms that benefited both Catholics and poorer Protestants. These are only two of myriad examples demonstrating that for many in the Derg Valley, locations evoke memory and beg narrative.

Although worthy of reiteration, these observations about the fusion of place and history imparted through narrative are nothing new. The notion of landscape as a vast mnemonic device for narratives treating the past is born out in the works of, among others, Maurice Halbwachs (1939, [1941] 1992), Pierre Nora (1984, 1989), Tim Robinson (1986, 1995), Mary Hufford (1992), Kent Ryden (1993), and Keith Basso (1996). History is the essence of the idea of place, contends Henry Glassie in

his monumental ethnography of a Northern Irish community fifty miles to the south of the Derg (1982, especially chapter 31). Location and the past are inextricably bound through narratives that impart, among other things, a sense of place. The materiality of location provides the catalyst for remembrance, draws the past into the present, and allows for the world of experience, memory, and ideas to be mapped onto landscape, rendering undifferentiated space as meaningful place.

Many in the Derg Valley are self-consciously aware of the role of landscape, memory, and narrative in the construction of a sense of place. Moreover, faced with opposing Catholic and Protestant versions of history publicly reasserted year after year, many realize that the past as a contemplative resource is limitless, and representations of the past are necessarily selective and fundamentally matters of rhetoric. Rhetoric persuades, and its consequences can be grave. The few who dare to hope that the world need not be as it is are no longer willing to cede the realm of public discourse to the rhetoric of partisan parades, murals, and ballads.

The western Derg Valley appears on maps as a spit of County Tyrone that juts into County Donegal and what is now the Republic of Ireland. This peninsula of sorts is coterminous with the parish of Termonamongan, also known by Catholics as Aghyaran. It is a rural and largely agrarian area. The central and only village is Killeter, and just to the east of this area is the much larger town of Castlederg. Although Catholics and Protestants were more equally represented in the western Derg Valley at the time of Partition, today Catholics outnumber Protestants by about five to one.

In the midst of wranglings among native clans, ecclesiastic spheres of influence, and colonizers and the colonized, this area has always been border country. Despite relatively peaceful cross-community relations from the 1930s until the 1960s, the western Derg Valley has not been immune from the violence of the past thirty years that has plagued the province as a whole.

During the 1970s, the proscribed Irish Republican Army began a bombing campaign in Castlederg, exchanged fire with the British Army, robbed the dole from what was then the Killeter Orange Hall, and

destroyed government property including postal vans and buses. In addition, three IRA men died in two separate incidents in 1973 and 1989 while handling bombs of their own making. Whether targeted by Derg Valley republicans or those from other areas, at least eighteen Protestant civilians, police officers and reservists, and part-time soldiers from Castlederg were killed by gunfire or bombs between 1972 and 1991. These acts of republican violence inevitably led to retaliatory strikes by Protestant paramilitaries. In 1972, a loyalist car bomb destroyed several buildings in Killeter and killed a young Catholic woman as she was posting invitations for her wedding. Although widely believed not to have been involved with the IRA, two members of Sinn Féin—the political party most closely associated with the IRA—were shot and killed by loyalists in 1977 and 1991. In both cases, there is evidence of collusion among the overwhelmingly Protestant police force, British army, and loyalists. Altogether, this cycle of violence has had a devastating and lasting effect on Catholic-Protestant relations in Castlederg and its hinterland in the Derg Valley. In such a context, attempting to ameliorate sectarian division seems at first an impossible task but nonetheless one of considerable urgency.

In 1988, graduates of the one-room schoolhouse in Gortnagross townland³ held a warm and well-attended reunion. The student body had always been denominationally mixed until the late 1950s, when the Derry Dioceses put increased pressure on Catholics to send their children to “voluntary” or “maintained” schools, whose curricula could be supervised by local Catholic clergy. Many middle-aged and elderly Gortnagross graduates believe that going to school with members of other denominations instilled in them a sense of cross-community solidarity that has been severely threatened by more recent events. At the reunion, Gortnagross School became emblematic of an ideal past way of life, and plans were floated to refurbish the school as a politically neutral community center. These plans failed for both political and economic reasons, yet a core group of nearly a dozen Gortnagross graduates and like-minded people began to discuss the possibility of various cross-community initiatives.

This group included Catholic and Protestant teachers, civil servants, and farmers. Meeting in Castlederg, they discussed and abandoned several proposals for new organizations that would have

in some way overlapped or competed with already existing organizations. Finally, one farmer suggested creating an historical society. Not everyone shared what might be considered an antiquarian interest in the past. Yet what emerged from conversation was a vision of history as local rather than as sectarian—in other words, Derg Valley history rather than unionist or nationalist history. Hosting lectures on topics of shared interest could—the thinking went—at least bring Catholics and Protestants into the same room. Restoring historical sites of shared interest could redirect attention to shared ground, shared culture.

The historical society idea became appealing once people began to think of exploring local history as a means to an end. As one of the founders told me, he was initially cautious because his first impression was that history in Northern Ireland can only conjure images of division and grievance. He continued:

I knew I was no historian, but I am very interested in better relations so I joined in. Maybe I was a token Protestant. Maybe. But, I tell you, I hate the damned old elections. I hate when they rear their heads, remind people they're separated. This seemed like, the society looked like, a step in the right, or maybe a better direction.

You may be surprised to know that these are the words of a loyal member of the Orange Order.

In 1990 this group drew up a constitution for the Killeter and District Historical Society (KDHS). As an historical society, its primary goal is relatively unique: first and foremost, the group aims to better local Catholic-Protestant relations. This is more than a subtext. As the constitution states, the society exists “to promote and develop cross-community cooperation through the exploration and development of the history and culture of the district.”

Lectures were organized on topics including townland histories, wakes and seasonal customs, local graveyards and archaeological sites, and the work of local poets. These lectures were held on winter evenings at the Derg Leisure Center in Castlederg, the nearest politically neutral public venue. Unfortunately, the early- to mid-nineties saw setbacks in

cross-community relations due to local, politically motivated violence and tensions relating to ongoing province-wide debates over the routes of Orange Order parades. Attendance at the lectures varied. Some complained that weather and travel distance to Castlederg made attending inconvenient, so attention shifted to securing funds for building a neutral venue in Killeter that could host future meetings and house the society's collection of historical farming implements. (Incidentally, construction on the Killeter building is complete, and it should open in June of 2002.)

Although efforts to maintain the lecture series lost momentum, other efforts to direct attention to the local shared past flourished. This success has been due, in part, to the value of sites on the landscape as physical reminders of ideological convictions. The society was particularly good at securing grants for historic preservation projects, and the sites chosen for restoration are telling. The first site restored was a pre-Reformation graveyard in Magherakeel townland that both Catholic and Protestant families continue to use. By restoring the graveyard the society not only made it accessible, but they also marked it for display, inviting contemplation of the memories and ideas the site may evoke.

Magherakeel graveyard stands near the foundations of the original Catholic parish church, St. Caireall's, which was destroyed in the early 1600s during the Plantation. Given that the Anglican Church of Ireland reestablished St. Caireall's in 1693 and took over at least nominal control of Magherakeel graveyard, a strict nationalist or republican interpretation of the site would characterize it as emblematic of Protestant encroachment on Catholic property. The KDHS, however, attempted to at least offer (if not fix) a different interpretation on the site. Theirs was a self-conscious attempt to render the graveyard as a place emblematic of coexistence, a place where both traditions share common ground—sacred ground, no less.

This is one potential interpretation of the graveyard as a whole, and particular grave markers offer reminders that bolster this interpretation. Dating back to the early 1700s, legible headstones in this graveyard evoke memories, for locals, about past community members. Magherakeel graveyard as a whole functions as a memory garden to individuals who—when resurrected through narrative—may

be used to embody certain values and political stances no longer as common today. To one side, for instance, is a marker dedicated to the memory of a local Protestant farmer who contemporary locals remember for having donated building stones to Catholics refurbishing St. Patrick's Holy Well not far away. To the other side is the grave of a local republican who, believing the British army to be the true aggressors and common enemy to both Catholics and Protestants, ensured that his Protestant neighbors would not be harassed or targeted by his fellow Catholics.

One Magherakeel marker in particular serves as a reminder of an often-told legend of immediate relevance in the unsettled present. Over eleven feet tall and built into the southern retaining wall of the graveyard, this stone monument features several carvings in relief. A neoclassical winged angel attracts attention toward the center of the monument, while skulls and bones and a toppled hourglass adorn the base and a crucifix and other symbols of the priest's vocation embellish the top. These carvings revolve around a lengthy *vita* in Latin that details the life and career of Father Cornelius O'Mongan, who died in 1725. Locals know that Fr. O'Mongan was the parish priest during the Penal Era, when the practice of Catholicism was severely restricted by law, and bounties were paid for Catholic priests who did not abide by strict regulations. According to local legend, one day Fr. O'Mongan was hotly pursued by soldiers sent into the area to capture him. The priest fled throughout the parish looking for a place to hide, and eventually a miller by the name of Kyle saved him from capture and possible execution. In some versions of the story, the miller hides the priest, and in others he openly challenges the soldiers and fires his musket to disperse them. Kyle, it turns out, was a Protestant. This story is told by many as a sort of origin myth of, and social charter for, local friendly relations between Catholics and Protestants.

I first heard a full version of this local historical legend from Mary Alice Mongan (RIP) when she was entertaining me and others who had come to visit for a *ceili*—a night's chat. As Mary Alice told the story, the affiliations that mattered to Kyle were local rather than sectarian. Kyle demonstrated that because they share the same place and way of life, Catholics and Protestants in this part of the world tend to share an aversion to blind obedience of outside authority.

Particularly instructive is the fact that in the legend—a genre of folklore different from the parade, mural, and political ballad—and in the intimacy of Mary Alice’s kitchen—a less public realm than city streets and pubs—this more complicated story is possible. To hear the more complicated story that potentially challenges the authority of a sectarian vision of the world requires paying attention to genres of folklore in more intimate, personal realms. Once we leave the streets where the marches take place and the murals are painted, once we leave the public houses where the ballads are sung, other genres of folklore become more important and drive at different persuasive ends. For those with local knowledge who participate in storytelling sessions during *ceilis* and wakes, the more complicated story is drawn from the intimate realm into the public realm by the historical society’s efforts to emphasize Magherakeel graveyard as worthy of contemplation. The KDHS’s restoration turned the graveyard into a signifier of a more complicated past—one capable of complicating a present in which oversimplifying the past in binary, “Catholic vs. Protestant” terms can lead to fear, distrust, and justifications for violence.

For these first preservation efforts and the potential messages conveyed, the historical society received a grant and an award from British Telecom. BT also hosted a reception at the site attended by politicians from across the political spectrum. It was good publicity for the society and provided considerable momentum for further preservation projects.

After the graveyard, the next site restored was a nearby lime kiln. Lime kilns went out of widespread use after World War II, but they remain common, often overgrown, features of the rural landscape. They are large, stone structures comprising an inverted cone in which limestone was fired and rendered into powder. This powder was used in whitewash for houses or plowed into land reclaimed from bog in order to neutralize the acidic soil. In choosing to restore the lime kiln, the KDHS highlighted a relic of rural industry used by Catholics and Protestants alike. What is important are the ideas the site can evoke, ideas to which we will shortly return.

There is a sense held by most people I came to know that cross-community relations in the Killeter area may be strained at times but are much better than in Castlederg and larger towns and cities across

the province. People attribute this to the fact that most living around Killeter are of roughly the same class, have shared interests in farming, and are in fairly regular contact, regardless of religious denomination. Informed by the news media and relatives who have moved to urban areas, western Derg Valley residents understand that because urban Catholics and Protestants are largely segregated, they have few experiences upon which to build mutual trust. Conversely, until recently, Catholic and Protestant farmers around Killeter regularly engaged each other in labor and equipment trading arrangements. In fact, many found that “swapping” with farmers they were not related to ensured more equal relationships, and this often meant swapping with someone from the “other side of the house”—that is, of the opposite religion. The late 1960s marked not only the reemergence of the Troubles but also a time when nearly every Killeter farmer could afford labor-saving technology, notably the tractor. Today both political tensions and technological change have conspired to reduce the interdependence of Catholic and Protestant farmers in the area, but the ideal of interdependence remains. It is commemorated in anecdotes told about past locals and can be witnessed in daily hospitality and in the attendance at wakes of all near neighbors, regardless of religious denomination.

So why restore the lime kiln? Its significance lies not just in its being a relic of the past. Its appropriateness lies not just in its being a politically neutral site. It is emblematic of a time when farming and much of daily life had not yet become matters of more independent, solitary practice. It evokes the idea that in a place where Catholics and Protestants share the same way of life, they have more in common in their daily lives than they have differences. Without ever having read the works of E. Estyn Evans or his students and colleagues, the KDHS’s members drew inspiration from the same principles underlying the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and, arguably, folklife studies in Northern Ireland as a whole.⁴

The society continues with other preservation projects. For each nominally Catholic site restored, the KDHS also restores a nominally Protestant site. More important than the equal balance struck is the choice of sites. The past is inscribed on the landscape. By highlighting certain sites, history is told and messages are communicated: ‘There

is common ground. Division is not preordained. To prove that the present need not be as it is, look to our past.'

Danny McSorley, one of the society's founders, is a high-level civil servant, a part-time farmer, and a Catholic. I asked him to evaluate the success of KDHS projects in promoting cross-community contact and cooperation. He felt that the society's revival of Killeter Fair in 1997, after a fifty-year hiatus, was ultimately more successful in having Catholics and Protestants mingle than the lecture series had been. Originally a monthly market for sheep and cattle, Killeter Fair in its revived form offers games, contests, demonstrations of crafts, and musical and dramatic entertainment to highlight local cultural heritage. What might be considered a merely nostalgic resurrection of a fair that had long outlived its economic usefulness, what might be dismissed as an insignificant provincial concern, was widely acclaimed as an exceptional opportunity for people from across the political spectrum to socialize and to imagine themselves as a community rooted in place. As a local Democratic Unionist Party politician told him: "You know, Killeter Fair is important."⁵

Furthermore, Danny was satisfied that by redirecting attention to shared place through the historic preservation projects, the society had found an avenue through which to emphasize less contentious elements of the past in the public realm. These efforts were admittedly selective in nature, but they served to balance the public sectarian representations of the past already so familiar from annual parades, gable-end murals, and political ballads. As Danny summed up his evaluation of the society's efforts to effect change:

Well, our efforts may not have made much of a difference, but it held things from slipping further. In any case, it gave Protestants signals that—after a long and vicious IRA border campaign—that not all their Catholic neighbors, not even the majority of them, wanted them gone, pushed out. Gortnagross [School] may never be renovated, but community relations are in some ways stabilized, and there was a very grim time when this seemed impossible.

Rather than focus on scholarship and theory, thus far I have privileged reporting—that is, recounting the actions of people on the ground that are significant but not well known. However, in exploring the efforts of the KDHS we have veered into the theoretical territory of anthropologists, cultural geographers, folklorists, and historians concerned with a constellation of related issues including collective memory, tradition and traditionalizing, group or collective identity, and the sense of place.

Memory, tradition, identity, even place—we have come to see these as processes more than things. They are performed, constructed, maintained, and revised.⁶ Regarding the issue of place, I take my cue from Arjun Appadurai, who shifts attention from physical space to social practice that attaches meaning to space. What many refer to as “place” in contrast to abstract and undifferentiated “space,”⁷ Appadurai calls “locality” in contrast to “location.” He asserts that locality is fundamentally a “phenomenological quality,” a “property of social life,” and an “inherently fragile social achievement.” Locality must be continually reproduced and maintained as “structured feeling” (1996:178–82). Furthermore, the majority of what ethnographers write, wittingly or not, is a record of people’s efforts to produce and reproduce locality under conditions of social, political, economic, and ecological uncertainty and volatility (1996:181). In response to exactly this sort of uncertainty and volatility, KDHS members have made bids to identify what sort of place the western Derg Valley is and to derive locality from location in a way that challenges the logic and rhetoric of sectarianism.

Commemoration and history-telling through many forms and media is a primary vehicle for the production and reproduction of locality or a sense of place. Although the issue of territory and the rhetorically valenced representation of the past command an extraordinary prominence in Irish social and political life, Ireland is far from the only location where place and history conjoin in people’s efforts to conceptualize their world. In *Wisdom Sits in Places*, for example, Keith Basso offers a masterful treatment of how Western Apaches in Arizona use landscape and language to know and evaluate

themselves in the past and present (1996). As Glassie found in Ballymenone (1982), Basso found that in Cibecue “geographical features have served the people for centuries as indispensable mnemonic pegs on which to hang the moral teachings of their history” (1996:62). In Basso’s terms, a site of cultural, historical, and even moral significance is a “place-world”—a site through which elements of the past are vivified as the needs of the present demand. Magherakeel graveyard, I would argue, is just such a place-world.

Importantly, Basso reiterates and expands what we have already established about the interrelationship of place and history by introducing the possibility of revision.

Place-making is a way of constructing history itself, of inventing it, of fashioning novel versions of “what happened here.” For every developed place-world manifests itself as a possible state of affairs, and whenever these constructions are accepted by other people as credible and convincing—or plausible and provocative, or arresting and intriguing—they enrich the common stock on which everyone can draw to muse on past events, interpret their significance, and imagine them anew. Building and sharing place-worlds, in other words, is not only a means of reviving former times but also of revising them, a means of exploring not merely how things might have been but also how, just possibly, they might have been different from what others have supposed. Augmenting and enhancing conceptions of the past, innovative place-worlds change these conceptions as well. (1996:6)

Realizing the constructed nature of place and history should not lead us to a moment of postmodern disenchantment or condescending ‘I know more than the natives’ smugness. As our case study in the Derg Valley demonstrates, ordinary people are well aware of and value the possibility of revision as essential for moral acts undertaken in defense of community.

Received wisdom about the division of the world into that which is Catholic and that which is Protestant is difficult to contest, but given the costs of such received wisdom, revision is urgent. Challenging a status quo bolstered by sectarian visions of the past requires an alternative vision of the past. In the KDHS’s efforts to evoke a

nonsectarian local past through their preservation projects, the governing metaphor is more “place” than “time.” Sites on the landscape are selected and transformed from locations into symbols. They are useful for the ideas they can be made to express. By redirecting attention to that which is local and shared, the KDHS challenges impulses toward segregation and difference. As Kevin Whelan reminds us, the appeal to “localism” can easily be construed as an appeal to conservatism in a world increasingly understood to be globalized (1993:13). Yet Catholics and Protestants in West Tyrone remind us that the appeal to the local need not be inherently provincial or reactionary. Local history can be of service in the present and can be marshalled as an appeal for a better future. Careful bids to render space as meaningful, shared place can accomplish social work of great moral weight and potential consequence.

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Notes

1. For the relationship between constructions of arguably sectarian history and place in Northern Ireland, see Bryan 2000a and 2000b, Jarman 1997, and Walker 1996 concerning commemorative parades; Rolston 1991, 1992, 1995, and 1999, again Jarman 1997, and Jarman 1998 concerning urban murals and graffiti; and Glassie 1982 concerning oral tradition.

2. In *Dancing to History's Tune*, Brian Walker gathers several instances of contemporary political and journalistic rhetoric in Northern Ireland that provide evidence of a recurring trope: ‘The past must be forgotten if the people of Northern Ireland are to live together in peace’ (1996:vii, 65–67, 73–74, 153–54). Articulations of this point of view multiplied in the wake of the devastating 1998 bomb in Omagh, Co. Tyrone, and continue in the present.

3. Townlands are the smallest administrative geographical units recognized in rural Ireland, and in this area of West Tyrone typical townlands comprise between ten and thirty farms, with each farm ranging from twenty to a few hundred acres.

4. Referring to the establishment of the Ulster Folk Museum in Cultra, Co. Down, Evans wrote, "Here, at least, in the effort to record, preserve, and study traditional Ulster ways and values, a divided community appears to find common ground" (1965:355). See Cashman 1996 for a treatment of the politics informing the broader field of Ulster folklife studies as founded and still influenced by Evans.

5. The DUP politician's comment to Danny McSorley is remarkable in part because the DUP has served since its foundation in 1971 as one of the most conservative voices of Ulster unionism. Led by unionist hardliner and Free Presbyterian minister Rev. Ian Paisley, the DUP has regularly been perceived by Catholics as an organization espousing fundamentally bigoted views.

6. Recent reconsiderations of all four notions are conceptually parallel. Essential texts on collective memory as a process of reconstruction mediated by the concerns of the present, rather than as a storage and retrieval system that provides true recall, include Halbwachs [1941] 1992 and Nora 1989.

Tradition may be seen less as an inherent quality of a given text, action, or object, and more as a rhetorical resource in people's appeals to a sense of authority, permanence, and stability. Reconsideration of the concept of tradition has led to an emphasis on processes of traditionalizing. Key texts on this issue include Hymes 1975, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Handler and Linnekin 1984, and Bauman 1992.

No longer considered *a priori*, identity—in particular collective identity—has likewise been reconceived as discursively created, affirmed, and/or negotiated, often through appeals to the past and tradition. For helpful illustrations, among many, see Noyes 1995 and Ben-Amos and Weissberg 1999. Addressing Northern Ireland in particular, see Buckley and Kenney 1995.

Parallel reconsideration of place as a socially constructed process and practice rather than a reification of bounded space is further delineated as the body of this article continues.

7. Early assertions of the semantic distinction between "space" as sterile and merely geographical and "place" as experienced and endowed with meaning can be found in Relph 1976 and Tuan 1977. For an excellent reflection on the difference between space and place as articulated by several scholars concerned with a humanistic approach to geography, see Ryden 1993:23–40.

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